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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 12th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. HADID (Algeria)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 121: REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/47/277, A/48/281, A/48/428, A/48/452 and A/48/460; E/AC.51/1993/L.6/Add.1, Add.2, Add.30 and Add.31)

1. Mr. MERIFIELD (Canada), speaking also on behalf of Australia and New Zealand, said that the three delegations proposed that the Committee should draft a resolution orienting the culture of the senior levels of United Nations management towards achievement, improved service and the proper stewardship of resources and away from adherence to process as an end in itself. The resolution should make it clear that the integration of the Office for Project Services (OPS) in the Department for Development Support and Management Services must be in full conformity with the decisions of the General Assembly and the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and should define the mandate of the Assistant Secretary-General for Inspections and Investigations in a manner which would contribute to the effectiveness of the Organization.

2. The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) was right to state in its report on accountability and oversight (A/48/420) that the Secretariat could not claim to be special or different. The Secretariat could adopt and apply standard practices immediately and had the example of UNDP to follow in creating a culture of accountability: the need was not for introspection but for leadership.

3. The three delegations hoped that the Secretariat had taken full account of the discussion in the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) and its comments on the reports on restructuring and on accountability. The Secretariat must understand that Member States demanded - from the most senior official down to the lowest - a commitment to delivering the results requested in the most economical manner possible. The Secretariat must also demonstrate that there were systems in place for judging its performance. The commitment made by the Secretary-General in paragraph 23 of his previous year's report on the work of the Organization (A/47/1) concerning the most effective use of resources was not understood throughout the Secretariat. The most senior officials in the Secretariat must see themselves as serving the membership of the Organization. Managers must be given the freedom to act within a set of rules which facilitated programme delivery and reduced any tendency towards defensiveness. The rules now in place were sufficient to ensure that funds were spent for the purposes approved by the General Assembly. If applied positively, they permitted considerable freedom of action. However, a large body of prescriptive rules and procedures had come into being which stifled initiative and led to a loss of control. Paragraph 10 of the report of the Secretary-General on accountability and responsibility of programme managers (A/48/452) stated that controls were by their nature cumbersome. There was no reason why that should be so.

4. Despite all the rules, there was a lack of clear accountability in the Secretariat and frequent lapses of accountability. The solution to such problems did not lie in more rules but rather in a commitment to good management. The most senior official in each department must see himself as

(Mr. Merifield, Canada)

fully responsible to the General Assembly for delivering the programme with the maximum economy and quality, and rules, regulations and accountability standards must be devoted to serving that objective.

5. The JIU report on accountability (A/48/420) contained some startling affirmations, for example that there was no system for measuring the performance of personnel at the D-2 level and above (para. 135). JIU questioned the insularity of the management culture in the United Nations and the attempt by senior officials to justify their refusal to look at other systems by saying that the United Nations was different. The three delegations endorsed the JIU conclusion that "business as usual" responses were no longer acceptable (para. 152).

6. The question of the integration of OPS must be viewed in that context. The report of the Secretary-General on the subject (A/48/502) went against all the improved practices which Member States had been seeking. The Governing Council of UNDP and the Fifth Committee had already stated what was expected of OPS. The report did not meet those expectations, for the proposals set out therein would stifle an effective project-delivery agency. The whole point of the expansion of OPS in UNDP had been to enhance its autonomy and flexibility. The Secretariat seemed to prefer the standardization of procedure to meeting the requirements of the Governing Council. The report must be totally rethought if the Secretariat at its most senior levels was to show its commitment to the delivery of the mandates of the intergovernmental bodies.

7. The three delegations had welcomed the Secretary-General's announcement regarding his intention to create an Office of Inspections and Investigations, but it now appeared that that decision would not be put into effect. They would like a report on the current situation and requested the Secretary-General to bring forward the proposal for such an Office with broader oversight and accountability responsibilities at the current session. Such an Office should have a clear mandate to promote a culture of performance and accountability and not merely to delve into lapses of probity and instances of non-compliance. Staff members should not have to follow unwieldy rules and procedures which inhibited innovation, and the success of the Office should not be measured by the number of mistakes which it found. The staff already saw their relationship to the Office as adversarial. Unless the Office was neutral it could not serve as a guide to managers and the whole purpose of the internal audit and evaluation function would be lost.

8. The United Nations could empower its senior officials and programme managers only if those officials and managers realized that the prime objective was to serve the needs of Member States. There must be a commitment to management practices which set clear objectives and related the performance of the entire staff to some fundamental rules reflecting the spirit of the JIU report. That spirit must be incorporated in a resolution. In her introduction of the report of JIU at the previous meeting, the Chairman of JIU had said that constructive criticism was the basic factor for proper work. The three delegations hoped that the Secretariat would respond positively to her comments.

9. Mr. DAMICO (Brazil) said that his delegation endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of CPC on accountability and responsibility and agreed with those delegations which had stated that the report of the Secretary-General on that subject (A/48/452) did not address the request made by Member States but merely conveyed the message that the existing systems of accountability and responsibility were not efficient or had not been implemented.

10. The views set out in paragraph 18 of the Secretary-General's report were particularly disappointing in that the paragraph referred only to the growing reliance of peace-keeping operations on civilian personnel hired from contractors and on seconded personnel. The report should have provided information on the systems of responsibility and accountability applicable to such personnel, but it stressed only the fact that their assimilation might have an adverse impact on the delivery of services by the Secretariat. Similarly, paragraph 57 indicated that the increased workload might require adjustments in the regulations and rules that now guided the work of the Secretariat. His delegation would not support any such changes if they implied looser standards.

11. His delegation reiterated that Member States should look more closely at the implementation of intergovernmental mandates given to the Secretariat. A system of accountability and responsibility for programme managers would be conducive to improved monitoring of the implementation of activities. Such a system should consist of written guidelines providing a basis for a dialogue between the Secretariat and Member States on the improvement of the Organization's efficiency, and it should foster motivation and responsiveness in staff members. He welcomed the comments made on the subject in paragraph 6 of the CPC report (E/AC.51/1993/L.6/Add.31). The Fifth Committee should endorse the CPC recommendations, in particular the request for a report on the implementation of a system of accountability and responsibility for programme managers.

12. Mr. TEIRLINCK (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States, said that they endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of CPC concerning a new approach to programme planning. It was regrettable that, despite the clear request from the General Assembly in resolution 47/214, the Secretariat had not presented a prototype of a possible new format of the medium-term plan. The General Assembly should adopt a specific resolution on the subject.

13. The States members of the European Community also supported without reservation the CPC proposals concerning the preparation and implementation of the programme budget. The programme budget must be designed in such a way that the report on its implementation would facilitate the monitoring of the attainment of its objectives and the assessment of the performance of programme managers. They regretted that the report of the Secretary-General on the accountability and responsibility of programme managers (A/48/452) had not offered a solution to the problem and they supported the CPC recommendation that a system of accountability and responsibility should be implemented no later than 1 January 1995 (E/AC.51/1993/L.6/Add.31). Improvement of the management of programmes and activities was fundamental to the quest for effectiveness. Without such a system, the functions of inspection and of identification of waste would be operating in a vacuum. It was regrettable that another year had passed without the implementation of a system which was clearly needed and

(Mr. Teirlinck, Belgium)

concerning which the General Assembly had already adopted resolutions at its forty-sixth and forty-seventh sessions.

14. The States members of the European Community had taken note of the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/48/281. They agreed with CPC that there was no need to modify the existing procedures relating to statements of programme budget implications and the contingency fund. They reserved their position on the problem of estimates for preventive diplomacy and peacemaking pending receipt of the relevant report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.

The meeting was suspended at 11 a.m. and resumed at 12.05 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 127: SCALE OF ASSESSMENTS FOR THE APPORTIONMENT OF THE EXPENSES OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/48/11)

15. Mr. ALI (Chairman of the Committee on Contributions), responding to points raised during the debate on the item, said that in many respects delegations had echoed the deliberations in the Committee on Contributions. Virtually all speakers had referred to the need for methodological change to assess more accurately the capacity to pay, in general, and to deal with the concerns of the 22 Member States referred to in paragraph 21 of the report, in particular. There was, however, some divergence of opinion with regard to the means of achieving the desired change. About half of the delegations advocated modification of the current methodology; a quarter favoured the full implementation of the mandate set out in resolution 46/221 B; and the rest preferred more radical approaches.

16. From a technical perspective there was little to add to the two latest reports of the Committee on Contributions (A/47/11 and A/48/11). It appeared that more than a minor adjustment of the methodology was required in order to meet the concerns of the 22 Member States in question in the context of a reasonable scale of assessments for all Member States. That did not mean that the objective could not be achieved with the present methodology; that depended more on political will than on technical expertise.

17. It was to be hoped that the General Assembly would have the resolve to provide the Committee on Contributions with guidelines for the preparation of the next scale of assessments which would contain the seeds of consensus rather than disagreement, while recognizing that a scale satisfactory to all Member States would have to remain an objective rather than a reality.

18. Since he was addressing the Committee for the last time, he took the opportunity to review his long association with the United Nations, in particular with the International Civil Service Commission, the Committee on Contributions, and the Fifth Committee itself. On the basis of that experience, he felt that the United Nations was now at the threshold of fulfilling its mission for humanity. It was for Member States to enable it to do so.

(Mr. Ali)

19. Following statements paying tribute to Mr. Ali by the CHAIRMAN, Mr. KHENE (Algeria) on behalf of the group of African States, Mr. BARIMANI (Islamic Republic of Iran) on behalf of the group of Asian States, Mr. KUKAN (Slovakia) on behalf of the group of Eastern European States, Mr. DIPP (Dominican Republic) on behalf of the group of Latin American and Caribbean States, Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands) on behalf of the group of Western European and other States, Mr. ZEVELAKIS (Greece) and Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan), the CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should endorse the recommendation in paragraph 3 of the report of the Committee on Contributions (A/48/11) that the General Assembly should appoint Mr. Ali as member emeritus of the Committee on Contributions.

20. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.